



Curran Apple Orchard Self Tour

3920 Grandview Dr. W
University Place, WA 98466
curranappleorchard.com

Welcome to the Curran Apple Orchard

This 7 ½ acre University Place city park is a working apple orchard as well as a unique outdoor classroom and home to a wide variety of birds and wildlife. The majority of the trees are the original trees planted by Charles Curran in the early 1950s. The CORE (Curran Orchard Resource Enthusiasts) volunteer group helps maintain the orchard and oversees activities such as the Adopt A Tree program, pruning parties, insect classes, summer concerts, tours and the Cider Squeeze each year.



Animal signs...watch your step! Wear rubber boots or old shoes when you visit the orchard. Watch out for deer, raccoon, goose, and rabbit droppings (poop/scat). You will see lots of small dirt mounds made by moles or gophers, push the dirt aside, poke with a stick and you may find the tunnel entrance. If you're lucky, you may also catch a glimpse of the blacktail deer that visit the orchard for tasty treats!

Geese travel in large groups so there can be a lot of poop!



deer scat



rabbit scat



raccoon scat will likely have seeds in it

"Forever Friends" by Artist John Jewell

After entering the orchard gate on Grandview Drive, take a moment to enjoy "Forever Friends" which is based on a real horse named Brewster who lived at the orchard. UP for Arts donated the sculpture along with the interpretative sign.

"Forever Friends" statue shows Brewster and a friend. It represents the deep connection between our rural past and hope for the future.



Curran Apple Orchard Espalier Sign

As you continue walking along Grandview towards Rock Road, you will see a huge metal sign spelling out the park's name using espaliered apple trees. This technique trains apple trees to grow in certain shapes while allowing for easier pruning, pest control and picking. They also bear fruit at an earlier age. Young children can have fun identifying the letters as they walk along.

High Density Area

Walk up the hill until you see a large fenced "High Density" area. CORE planted this area with a variety of apples which would be ready in time for the annual Cider Squeeze, usually held in late August.

The tall fence protects the trees from the deer. This area also uses the **Slender Spindle Espalier** system which results in easier pruning and an incredible harvest.



Basic Pruning Steps For Espaliers



Espalier is a technique of training trees through pruning and grafting that results in largely two-dimensional growth to create decorative patterns. The High Density area is an example of the Slender Spindle and V-trellis techniques. This area has about 40 trees, on mini-dwarf rootstock, in an area previously occupied by two apple trees.

Curran House

Make your way along the fence line to see the outside of the Curran House. (Please respect the privacy of the renter.) The UP Historical Society is leasing the house from the City so that it can continue with renovations for a future UP Historical museum on the property.

Mary and Charles Curran originally won a nearby half acre lot in an essay contest entitled “Why I want to live in University Place.” A short time later, the couple bought a 7 ½ acre parcel off Grandview Drive on which they built their home to raise their three children: Charles Jr, Susan and Catherine.

The modern, mid-century home was designed by premier architect Robert Price, a well-known Tacoma architect who designed buildings for the Seattle World’s Fair and University of Washington, among other bank, school and family home projects. The Curran home is on the National Register of Historic Places.

They also constructed a barn on the property and raised several animals including horses and cattle. After admiring orchards in Eastern Washington, Mr. Curran also used bulldozers and dynamite to remove blackberries and stumps to plant more than 250 apple trees, many of which are still in the orchard today.

Robert Price



Mary and Chuck Curran stand below their home with horses Brewster and Christopher. Brewster, on the right in the photo, a great grandson of racing icon Man o’War, was bred with the hopes of becoming a racehorse. Right before his first race, Brewster came down with a serious illness and was not expected to live. The Currans couldn’t bear to put him down...instead they brought him home from the WSU Veterinary hospital, hand fed him, and Brewster survived! Although his racing career was over, Brewster and his brother Christopher lived happily at the orchard for many years, delighting countless visitors, accepting apples and occasionally giving rides.



Red Barn

This is the original Curran barn where CORE now stores all the equipment for maintaining the orchard. Covered picnic and outdoor classroom space were added. Next to the barn are 2 displays that explain basic apple pruning techniques.

Mason Bee Condos

Mason Bee Condos are located near the barn and throughout the orchard. CORE works with a local beekeeper who provides the “non stinging” Mason bees to help pollinate the orchard each year. Bees are critical for a successful harvest. After the apple blossoms open up in the Spring, the bees must pollinate the flowers within 24-48 hours. If the weather is rainy or too cold, the bees won’t fly.



Belgian “Diamond” Espalier

Facing the barn, the espalier on the right side is a Belgian Fence which has several different types of apples grafted onto it, including a small type of crab apple that can be mistaken for cherries. Crab apples were used by pioneers as a thickening agent for pudding and gravy. They are the source of all domestic apples grown today. Ours are bitter in taste but with enough sugar may make tasty crab apple jelly. Cut one open, just like a big apple inside!





Down the hill is a wonderful “apple crate” band shell and stage designed by local Curtis High School students to resemble a big apple crate. Stand inside and feel like an apple looking through the slats that keep air flowing around the apples to keep them fresh. Go right to the corner to enjoy the climbing rocks.



Get involved!

Volunteers needed for a variety of activities. Contact CORE - apples@curran appleorchard.com. Appropriate pruning, thinning, sprays, insect traps and windfall pick ups are all important factors in keeping our orchard healthy. CORE volunteers undertake much of the labor involved along with providing free instructions to interested people.



Curran Orchard has over 200 apple trees, and 15 varieties of apples. Many of the trees planted by the Currans are Gravenstein, Golden Delicious and Macintosh. The orchard has 16 “insect test trees” – four trees in each quarter – to help monitor potential apple maggot and codling moth activities. “Sticky red plastic apples” with attached pheromones and codling moth tents are placed in these trees to help determine whether additional sprays are needed.



Trees have tags on them with row & tree number. If there is a name, then the tree is adopted by a person or group for the year. The adopter gets all the apples produced from their tree.

Gravenstein is sweet-tart, crispy, good for cooking or eating fresh. Keeps 2-3 weeks after picking.



Golden Delicious is balanced sweet-tart, juicy, good eaten raw or baked.



Macintosh is tart, good for eating or cooking. Keeps 3 weeks after picking.



Akane (uh-kay nay) is a blend of sweet and sharp flavor. Eat or dry.



Red Gravenstein is a great cooking and eating apple.



Braeburn is good for fresh eating, tarts and applesauce.



Chehalis are crisp and good for eating and baking.



Alkmene (alk me nee) has strong flavor, tanginess and it is juicy. Good for fresh eating.



King is a big apple good for dessert fruit and cooking.



Liberty is resistant to many diseases. They are big and red.



Spitzenberg is sweet and juicy. Great for applesauce.

Winter Banana is great for fresh eating. Super for desserts.



Wolf River is hardy and disease resistant, sweet, great cooking apple.



Spring-Pink buds open up into white flowers. Bees start pollinating.
Summer-Tiny fruit begins to form, turning into delicious apples. The bottom of the apple is what is left of the flower.



Winter-Apple trees go dormant. They lose all their leaves. In late Jan to early Feb, pruning begins to help increase circulation of air and light along with removing a portion of unnecessary branches.

